

TESTIMONY: ASSEMBLY BILL 942
ASSEMBLY NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
4/13/10



Chairman Black, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of Assembly Bill 942.

This bill would make it easier for property owners who live on the bay of Green Bay as well as Lake Michigan and Lake Superior to remove an extremely troublesome and invasive plant called phragmites.

Over the past several years, after having this issue brought to our attention, Representative Nygren and I have been working to find a solution to what can best be described as a rapidly growing problem.

Phragmites are extremely problematic and have virtually taken over the shores of Green Bay along my district and beyond. With the addition of Rep. Soletski's support every district that lines Green Bay is now represented on this bill from Marinette County to Door County.

As you will hear from some of my constituents who are here today, phragmites are a major source of concern with respect to its impact on the local environment and native plants and habitat, property values, tourism and the ability of area residents and homeowners to enjoy the Bay.

As you will also hear, Phragmites also present a significant fire danger in the areas where they exist.

In the past Rep. Nygren and I worked with staff and officials from the DNR to make changes to the General Permit process that we hoped would resolve the concerns of our constituents with respect to their ability to remove these plants. Unfortunately, many of our constituents did not find the changes all that helpful and requested that a legislative solution be pursued to resolve this problem.

The result of this effort is the bill and the amendment that are before you. AB-942 is narrow in scope as it applies only to the bay of Green Bay, Lake Superior and Lake Michigan and outlying waters.

As amended, AB-942 exempts the use of motor vehicles on lakebeds for the sole purpose of removing phragmites so long as the following conditions are met:

- The operation of the motor vehicle is for the purpose of mowing or applying an herbicide for the purpose of controlling *Phragmites australis*.

- The operation of the motor vehicle occurs only on the exposed bed of the outlying water.
- The operation of the motor vehicle occurs between the period beginning on July 1 of a given year and ending on March 15 of the following year.
- The mowing or application of the herbicide interferes with or destroys native species only to the degree that is necessary to control the invasive species *Phragmites australis*.

I believe AB-942 provides our best chance to provide relief to the people and communities who have to deal with this problem year after year and hopefully to protect inland lakes from being taken over by this extremely aggressive and invasive species.

Its companion bill, SB-614, recently passed the Senate Natural Resources committee as amended on a 7-0 vote.

Thank you.

Amendment to AB-942

The amendment does the following:

- Removes the reference to the lakebed needing to be dry.

There was some question as to how it would be determined if the lakebed was dry and who would make that determination. We felt that so long as the lakebed is exposed that the intent of our bill is still represented in the amendment.

- Moves the starting date from August 1st to July 1st.

This change reflects concerns voiced by our constituents at the Senate hearing.